Arab Refugee Congress' account of the Dawaymeh massacre – UNCCP's Technical Cttee on Refugees – Working paper

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

THE DAWAYMEH MASSACRE

Little is known about the brutal massacre of Arab peasants in the village of Dawaymeh on 28/10/48. Dawaymeh is situated a few kilometres West of Hebron. It had a population of six thousand people. Some four thousand Arab refugees had taken refuge in the village prior to the massacre. The reason why so little is known about this massacre which, in many respects, was more brutal than the Deir Yassin massacre, is because the Arab Legion (the Army in control of that area) feared that if the news was allowed to spread, it would have the same effect on the moral of the peasantry that Deir Yassin had, namely to cause another flow of Arab refugees.

For the benefit therefore of the Arab delegations assembled here in Lausanne, a brief account of the massacre is presented here. This account is taken out of a Sworn Statement given by Hassan Mahmoud Ihdeib, the Mukhtar of Dawaymeh village. I have personally interviewed the Mukhtar and found him to be a reasonable quiet mans not given to exageration.

He reports that half an hour after the midday prayer on Friday the 28/10/4, he heard the sound of shooting from the Western side of the village. On investigation, he observed a troop of some twenty armoured cars approaching the village on the Qubeiba-Dawaymeh road, a second troop approaching along the Beit Jibrin-Dawaymeh road and other armoured vehicles approaching from the direction of Mafkhar-Dawaymeh, The village had only twenty guards. They were posted on the Western side of the village.

When the armoured cars were within half a kilometer from the village, they opened fire from automatic weapons and mortars and advanced on the village in a semi-circular movement, thereby surrounding the village on the Western, Northern and Southern sides. A section of the armoured cars entered the village with automatic weapons blazing — Jewish troops jumped out of the armoured cars and spread out through the streets of the village firing promiscuously at anything they saw. The villagers began to flee the village while the older ones took shelter in the Mosque and others in a nearby cave called Iraq El Zagh. The shooting continued for about an hour.

The following day, the Mukhtar met with the villagers and agreed to return to the village that night to find out the fate of those that had stayed behind. He reports that in the Mosque there ware the bodies of some sixty persons, most of them were men of advanced age who had taken shelter in the Mosque. His father was among them. He saw a large number of bodies in the streets, bodies of men, women and children. He then went to the Cave of Iraq El Zagh. He found at the mouth of the cave the bodies of eighty five persons, again men, women and children.

The Mukhtar then carried out a census of the inhabitants of the village and found that a total of 455 persons was missing of whom 280 were men and the rest women and children.

There were other casualties among the refugees, the number of which the Mukhtar was unable to determine,

The Mukhtar explicitly states that the village had not been called upon to surrender and that the Jewish troops had not met with any resistance.

It need hardly be mentioned that this brutal and unprovoked attack occured during the truce.

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